

**“Remember the bubbles hurt you
when you cook in the pan”:
Using a storybook process to
explore young children's views of
illness causality**

Caroline McIntosh, Chris Stephens & Antonia Lyons
Public Health Association Conference 2012
Victoria University, Wellington
3-5 September, 2012

Research question

How are young children's views of illness causality embedded within the sociocultural context of the family?

Significance

- **Need for effective health education programmes and support for young children and their families**
- **Need for enhanced knowledge of children's understanding of biology and health**
- **Need for contextually-based research**

Conceptual framework

- **Influence of sociocultural contexts on children's learning and development**
- **The family as a 'community of practice'**
- **Narrative as a vehicle for understanding and sharing experience of the world**

Method

- **4-year-old children attending kindergarten, and their whanau**
- **Diversity of family contexts**
- **In-depth interviews**
- **Storybook process**









Analytical approach

Social interactional approach

- **Narrative as talk-in-interaction**
- **Co-production of narrative accounts**
- **Narrative as a form of social practice**
- **Micro and macro levels of social action and relationship**

Behaviour-based explanations

- Eating too much food e.g. 'if you eat too much ice-cream or stuff you get asthma'
- Being in the cold and the wind e.g. 'she was playing (outside) then she got cold'
- Physical force inflicted by another person e.g. 'someone hurt him on the head'

Illness prevention messages and behavioural rules

N: Her eyes are down low. That means her eyes are sore.

C: Her eyes are sore, ok. And how did she get the sore eyes do you think?

N: When you rub them too much they get so ...They get so blinky and ... You don't rub them when they are sore, you blink them when they are sore...

C: Have you had sore eyes before?

N: Oh yeah. I keep on rubbing them...

C: Do other people in your family have sore eyes sometimes?

N: No. Remember when you cook these bubbles go up on your eyes eh? And they're sore eh? Remember the bubbles hurt you when you cook in the pan and you cook and it hurts eh?

C: Ah, ok. And what's in the pan when the bubbles ...?

N: We ate some chicken noodles and we had some ham sandwich.

Implications for practitioners

- **Be aware of the impact of health messages shared within the family**
- **Develop health education and support programmes that recognize prior experiences, exchanges and understandings within the family**
- **Move from reliance on maturational models to an acknowledgement of sociocultural factors**

Implications for practitioners

- **Appreciate that children are likely to understand health information at an earlier age if it is meaningful to them in terms of their family context**
- **Engage with families**
- **Recognize that the beliefs of children and their families are inextricably connected to societal beliefs and values**